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A system for automatically pausing a video program in response to detection of the occurrence of a communications event or triggering event. In response to an incoming phone call, message, web page, or other communications information, the system pauses the video program and displays an indication of the occurrence of the communications event. The system also buffers the video program while paused, permitting a user to replay missed portions of it. Alternatively, the system waits for a triggering event, which includes the user's access to the communications event, in order to pause the video program.